



How to Protect Yourself from Fungal Diseases

Flood conditions contribute to the growth and transmission of many kinds of fungi, some of which can cause sickness. Cleanup workers are at increased risk of exposure to airborne fungi and their spores because they often handle moldy compost, decaying vegetable matter, and other fungus-contaminated debris. The fungal material is carried into the respiratory tract when airborne dust particles are inhaled.

Fungal Diseases

There are many different kinds of fungi, including mildew, molds, rusts, and yeasts. Most of these are harmless, but some can cause **skin, respiratory, and other disorders** when workers inhale or come into contact with fungi. Inhalation is the route of exposure of most concern to flood cleanup workers.

Wet crops and moldy compost encourage the growth of the fungi responsible for most outbreaks of an acute respiratory disease known as hypersensitivity pneumonitis (also called “farmer’s lung”). Compost or hay piles that have a water content of 40 percent or greater and that have warmed to temperatures in the 104° to 140°F range present ideal growing conditions for the fungi associated with this illness. Adequate ventilation should be ensured by venting silos or other areas prior to entry.

The signs and symptoms of hypersensitivity pneumonitis are the same, regardless of the particular fungus responsible. They include chills, fever as high as 104°F, shortness of breath, muscle aches, pain behind the breastbone, and other flulike symptoms. The disease begins suddenly, 4 to 6 hours after exposure to dustborne fungal spores, and lasts for 12 to 14 hours. If you should experience any of these symptoms, seek medical attention promptly. Recovery is usually spontaneous, providing that you are not reexposed to the fungus.

Repeated or prolonged contact of the skin with moisture, especially during hot weather, can lead to fungal infections of the skin. These can be minimized or avoided by washing the skin with warm, soapy water and keeping it as dry as possible. If a serious fungus infection develops on your skin, seek medical advice.

Certain fungi produce poisons called mycotoxins that can cause death if ingested in sufficient quantity—for example, if moldy grain is used to make bread. Therefore, such grains should not be used for food.

What to do if Symptoms Develop

If a cleanup worker experiences any of the signs or symptoms listed above, medical advice should be sought. Your health care provider will tell you whether you need to take medication and/or follow any other precautions.

Tips to Remember

- Avoid breathing dust (fungal spores) generated by wet vegetable matter.
- Wear a dust mask when working with moldy or damp hay, grain, compost, or building materials.
- Surfaces that have a light covering of mold should be scrubbed with warm, soapy water and rinsed with a disinfectant made of 1/2 cup of liquid household bleach mixed in one gallon of water.
- Do not mix bleach with other cleaning products.
- Articles that are heavily contaminated with mold should be discarded. When in doubt, throw it out.
- If the safety of a food or beverage is questionable, throw it out.
- After working with mold-contaminated materials, wash thoroughly, including the hair, scalp, and nails.

OSHA Area Offices

Area	Telephone	Area	Telephone	Area	Telephone
Albany, NY	(518) 464-4338	Denver, CO	(303) 844-5285	Nashville, TN	(615) 781-5423
Albuquerque, NM	(505) 248-5302	Des Plaines, IL	(847) 803-4800	New York, NY	(212) 466-2482
Allentown, PA	(610) 776-0592	Des Moines, IA	(515) 284-4794	Norfolk, VA	(757) 441-3820
Anchorage, AK	(907) 271-5152	Englewood, CO	(303) 843-4515	North Aurora, IL	(630) 896-8700
Appleton, WI	(920) 734-4521	Erie, PA	(814) 833-5758	Oklahoma City, OK	(405) 231-5351
Augusta, ME	(207) 622-8417	Fort Lauderdale, FL	(954) 424-0242	Omaha, NE	(402) 221-3182
Austin, TX	(512) 916-5783	Fort Worth, TX	(817) 428-2470	Parsippany, NJ	(973) 263-1003
Avenel, NJ	(908) 750-3270	Frankfort, KY	(502) 227-7024	Peoria, IL	(309) 671-7033
Baton Rouge, LA	(225) 389-0474	Harrisburg, PA	(787) 277-1560	Philadelphia, PA	(215) 597-4955
Bayside, NY	(718) 279-9060	Hartford, CT	(860) 240-3152	Phoenix, AZ	(602) 640-2007
Bellevue, WA	(206) 553-7520	Hasbrouck Heights, NJ	(201) 288-1700	Pittsburgh, PA	(412) 395-4903
Billings, MT	(406) 247-7499	Honolulu, HI	(808) 541-2685	Portland, OR	(503) 326-2251
Birmingham, AL	(205) 731-1534	Houston, TX	(281) 286-0583	Providence, RI	(401) 528-4669
Bismarck, ND	(701) 250-4521	Houston, TX	(281) 591-2438	Raleigh, NC	(919) 856-4770
Boise, ID	(208) 321-2960	Indianapolis, IN	(317) 226-7290	Salt Lake City, UT	(801) 487-0680
Bowmansville, NY	(716) 684-3891	Jackson, MS	(601) 965-4606	San Francisco, CA	(619) 557-2909
Braintree, MA	(617) 565-6924	Jacksonville, FL	(904) 232-2895	Savannah, GA	(912) 652-4393
Bridgeport, CT	(203) 579-5581	Kansas City, MO	(816) 483-9531	Smyrna, GA	(770) 984-8700
Calumet City, IL	(708) 891-3800	Lansing, MI	(517) 377-1892	Springfield, MA	(413) 785-0123
Carson City, NV	(702) 885-6963	Linthicum, MD	(410) 865-2055	St. Louis, MO	(314) 425-4249
Charleston, ArV	(304) 347-5937	Little Rock, AR	(501) 324-6291	Syracuse, NY	(315) 451-0808
Cincinnati, OH	(513) 841-4132	Lubbock, TX	(806) 472-7681	Tampa, FL	(813) 626-1177
Cleveland, OH	(216) 522-3818	Madison, WI	(608) 264-5388	Tarrytown, NY	(914) 524-7510
Columbia, SC	(803) 765-5904	Marlton, NJ	(609) 757-5181	Toledo, OH	(419) 259-7542
Columbus, OH	(614) 469-5582	Methuen, MA	(617) 565-8110	Tucker, GA	(770) 493-6644
Concord, NH	(603) 225-1629	Milwaukee, WI	(414) 297-3315	Westbury, NY	(516) 334-3344
Corpus Christi, TX	(512) 888-3420	Minneapolis, MN	(612) 664-5460	Wichita, KS	(316) 269-6644
Dallas, TX	(214) 320-2400	Mobile, AL	(334) 441-6131	Wilkes-Barre, PA	(717) 826-6538
				Wilmington, DE	(302) 573-6115

OSHA Consultation Project Directory

Regional Offices	Telephone	State	Telephone	State	Telephone
<i>Region I</i>		Alabama	(205) 348-3033	New Hampshire	(603) 271-2024
Boston, MA	(617) 565-9860	Alaska	(907) 269-4957	New Jersey	(609) 292-3923
<i>Region II</i>		Arizona	(602) 542-5795	New Mexico	(505) 827-4230
New York, NY	(212) 337-2378	Arkansas	(501) 682-4522	New York	(518) 457-2238
<i>Region III</i>		California	(415) 703-5270	North Carolina	(919) 807-2905
Philadelphia, PA	(215) 596-1201	Colorado	(970) 491-6151	North Dakota	(701) 328-5188
<i>Region IV</i>		Connecticut	(860) 566-4550	Ohio	(614) 644-2246
Atlanta, GA	(404) 562-2300	Delaware	(302) 761-8219	Oklahoma	(405) 528-1500
<i>Region V</i>		District of Columbia	(202) 576-6339	Oregon	(503) 378-3272
Chicago, IL	(312) 353-2220	Florida	(850) 922-8955	Pennsylvania	(724) 357-2396
<i>Region VI</i>		Georgia	(404) 894-2643	Puerto Rico	(787) 754-2171
Dallas, TX	(214) 767-4731	Guam	011- (671) 475-0136	Rhode Island	(401) 222-2438
<i>Region VII</i>		Hawaii	(808) 586-9100	South Carolina	(803) 734-9614
Kansas City, MO	(816) 426-5861	Idaho	(208) 426-3283	South Dakota	(605) 688-4101
<i>Region VIII</i>		Illinois	(312) 814-2337	Tennessee	(615) 741-7036
Denver, CO	(803) 844-3061	Indiana	(317) 232-2688	Texas	(512) 440-3854
<i>Region IX</i>		Iowa	(515) 965-7162	Utah	(801) 530-6901
San Francisco, CA	(415) 975-4310	Kansas	(785) 296-7476	Vermont	(802) 828-2765
<i>Region X</i>		Kentucky	(502) 564-6895	Virginia	(804) 786-6359
Seattle, WA	(206) 553-5930	Louisiana	(225) 342-9601	Virgin Islands	(809) 772-1315
		Maine	(207) 624-6460	Washington	(360) 902-5638
		Maryland	(410) 880-4970	West Virginia	(304) 558-7890
		Massachusetts	(617) 727-3982	Wisconsin	(608) 266-8579(H)
		Michigan	(517) 322-6823(H)		(414) 521-5063(S)
			(517) 322-1809(S)	Wyoming	(307) 777-7786
		Minnesota	(651) 297-2393		
		Mississippi	(601) 987-3981	(H) - Health	
		Missouri	(573) 751-3403	(S) - Safety	
		Montana	(406) 444-6418		
		Nebraska	(402) 471-4717		
		Nevada	(702) 486-9140		